

Only Connect

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by [AtticusCrete](#)

Summary

Based round the Eldon Stammelts case just so I could make terrible puns about him being a fun guy... what can I say? I hope you lichen it, I have moss up my sleeve, or should I leaves it, maybe branch out, or are you rooting for mor... (somebody stopped me, thank god)

Welcome to the Dr Plushy Pants AU where there is humour, tenderness, familiar faces, different deaths (squee), and some angst, corresponding fluff, slow burn, and divergences (Franklyn lives!). Watch for tags for each chapter/part. Canon adjacent. Maybe a second cousin twice removed - some events out of sequence.

It spans beyond the three seasons, and starts with 'a terrible name for a Museum', I've written bits from along the timeline. The ending of the whole series is already written. I'm currently going back to fill in the gaps.

And sorry about the titles, I'm rubbish at titles, and summaries, and notes, *shrugs* in my first four weeks of writing I clocked just under 100,000 words, what can I say? Feedback and friendliness gratefully received. I answer all comments, though it can take me a bit of time.

In real life I'm an archaeologist, and have other things I'm supposed to do. But I'm always delighted to hang out here...

Notes

Edited for appalling grammar and frequent changes of tense - everything is un betad, I know it shows!

Shit, and I spelled Beta-ed wrong. And that doesn't look right either. La la la. And to think I've spent good money on education (probably bad money too).

'Ms Lounds, you've been abominably rude. What's to be done about that? Hannibal lils,

'What did you say then?' Bev looks at Hannibal, he's got his serious and frankly shit scarey face on.

'He made rumbling noises which sounded very threatening, which didn't quite sit with his earlier comments about bake offs' Will is smiling at the memory 'though I know bake offs can be murder!'

The three of them are at Hannibal's Baltimore office. The previous day Hannibal caught Freddie Lounds out in an outrageous lie and they've been reading a moderately obnoxious article about Will on tattlecrime.com. They're waiting for Jimmy to arrive. Really they should be in the lab, or on FBI premises, but Will is in Baltimore and Jimmy is going to a book reading later in the evening (hey, I read! I have culture, no I'm not telling you what book) also in Baltimore so Hannibal has offered his office. He isn't quite sure how he feels about inviting an FBI forensic team into his home just yet.

His interactions with the team have been spread out but rewarding, mostly a brief introduction at the opening of the evil minds museum, a wave across a hallway, a very bad cup of coffee with Beverly who was definitely assessing him, an evening of badly judged alcohol and much humour, a discussion about the Hobbs case, two days in Minnesota, and he has met with Will Graham, the unwilling profiler, at Jack Crawford's request, officially and unofficially several times now. Including a memorable couple of days in a Japanese style cabin.

Those conversations have been interesting. Will is interesting. In the last four weeks he has rescued a dog (now called Winston, apparently), had some truly terrifying nightmares and possibly hallucinations, has barely slept at home, though he has managed when away from home, may have been stalked, and now has Freddie Lounds trailing him. His life is not a happy place to live.

And yet, and yet, there is some resilience, and delight, and charisma there. Jack is concerned that he might have broken Will (not the first agent he might have broken by the sound of it, there's some pain there Hannibal noted during the meal when they had discussed this), but Hannibal thinks he hasn't yet. Though it's worth paying attention to if he is to be of help to Will.

As well as the more formal conversations, and informal meetings, they've somehow fallen into texting or voice mailing the other, not everyday, but regularly. So much so that they each look for something if their phone has been off for any length of time. And they've both spent time at the bedside of Abigail Hobbs. The girl they saved when her father attempted to kill her before being shot by Will, in his first deadly force encounter. Which wasn't what it seemed at all.

Will has been friendly and open towards him, even after the intital semi disaster of that first full day together. They get on well. Will's mind is a fascinating place, Hannibal feels as though he is on holiday when he gets to stroll around there. What's unusual is that Will seems

equally intrigued by walking around Hannibal's mind with him. There's a degree of reciprocity there. Mutual understanding.

Hannibal is both intrigued and if he were completely ruthless in auditing his own emotions he finds himself to be rather charmed, and possibly rather more. After all Will did kiss him. In the interest of deterring a stalker, but never the less. It was a lovely kiss. And he kissed Will too. Just for practice. For both of them. It does take 10,000 hours to get good at something after all.

The article by Freddie Lounds basically says that Will is a psychopath in the employ of the FBI. It's not like it's something Will hasn't heard before. It's just a bit embarrassing right now. Abigail saw it, and that can't have helped her recovery. Hannibal is reading it right now, and Will would love to steer him away from a full and frank discussion of it.

Freddie might be obnoxious but part of her obnoxiousness is that she hits some truths. He'd really rather that Hannibal doesn't think he is a psychopath, what with all the other weirdness he is currently exhibiting and which he previously felt ok telling Hannibal about, at least until this article.

Telling someone else you're weird is ok if it's you doing the telling, it's a whole other ball game if it's a tabloid blogger! And Will has actually found some of the conversations with Hannibal helpful. He's been able to admit to a feeling of righteousness when he shoots Hobbs, which lasted until they found out what really was going on. Hannibal reminded him that perhaps this isn't so surprising given that he works in law enforcement in the USA where it is, relatively speaking, a matter of course that some people in the services are armed. Going up against someone with only a stick of candy floss isn't going to cut it.

And there is an understanding that sometimes shooting someone is the likely outcome, in part that's why there is a standardised post incident evaluation. Will struggles a bit to get his head round the fact that he is simply another serving officer who has killed someone in the line of duty and feels conflicted about it. The messages of law enforcement are all about justice and righteous vengeance exercised by the state, and in that moment an agent or officer is an operative of the state. It makes Will feel better and conflicted about feeling better.

But they saved Abigail. And despite how that turned out. They still need to work out what to do, about Abigail, or her cousin or everyone else involved, that they don't yet know about. And that they do. Nick Boyle still hasn't woken up.'

'Will? Are you with us?' Hannibal looks at him, handing him a glass of white wine

Will becomes aware that the conversation has gone on without him, and now involves wine. Bev is looking at him expectantly. He shakes his head slightly. 'Sorry, my head is bothering me a bit. I think it's just a migraine coming, my vision is a bit blurry'. 'Not the wine then' Hannibal holds his hand out for the glass and Will reluctantly gives it back. Damn. Could he look any more pathetic?

Hannibal looks at Will some more. In Hannibal's opinion Will is definitely not alright, but it is hard to tell how much of it is stress, the pressure from Jack, ongoing episodes of migraine, or something more. Hannibal even considers it possible that the sudden exposure to intense

bouts of socialising which has resulted from becoming part of the lab team might be contributing.

For all that the team are excellent in many respects, introverts like Will need to have time alone to recharge, whereas Bev would be exhausted by spending too much time on her own. He is aware that Will monitors his own alone time fairly rigorously but it could be hard to avoid committed colleagues.

He thinks though that this article is not helping. And the evidence that Freddie is following Will is disturbing. They'd encountered her at Port Haven leaning on the Bentley. Will was cross on behalf of the car! He also manifested a degree of protectiveness towards Hannibal that he finds endearing. He smiles faintly at the thought. And becomes aware that Will is looking at him

'Yes?'

'Wotcha smiling for?'

'I was remembering you telling Ms Lounds off for sitting on my car'

'Ooh, did she sit on the car. Ooooh Will, were you fierce?'

Will grins. Though Bev could be a bit much she could also just sometimes defuse things pretty well. 'Yeah. Really effectively frightening, grrr. She was quaking.'

'I can see it now!' Beverly and Hannibal both laugh,

Hannibal answers the knock at the waiting room door. On the doorstep outside is Zeller looking rather shamefaced. Jimmy Price is behind him, semi pushing him in.

'Brian has something to say, haven't you Brian. Most especially to Will, dont you' he lightly clips him round the ear.

'Will' Zeller looks like he wishes the ground would open up, he swallows a few times 'I did something stupid and a bit malicious and I'm really sorry.'

Jimmy prods him, 'tell him the rest',

'yeah ok. Ok. I gave Freddie Lounds some of the info about you and the Hobbs case and the mushroom stuff (Hannibal looks bemused but Bev makes the universal hand signal which indicates don't stop him now or we'll never hear this we can come back to that later), I sort of filled in things she didn't know.' He grimaces 'I think I also let on you come here for sessions with Dr L'.

Will laughs 'well that explains how she was here, thank god, I thought she was tailing me or Hannibal all the time!' He stops, still smiling and then asks, 'Zeller, did she sleep with you to get all that out of you?'

If anything Brian looks even more embarrassed, 'little bit'

Will really laughs then, 'fantastic, amazing, you are a prize idiot. I hope she gave you a good time?'

The others all look at him, is he being sarcastic? 'Will?'

'I actually mean it, sure I'm pissed at being sold out, but Brian it's almost worth it to see your face now, really. And if you got laid good, well hey. It's not all bad, truly. And you fronted up here, that's worth something too.'

The group is silent looking at him.

'What?'

Hannibal probably speaks for them all 'that seems remarkably generous of spirit, in the light of the article itself'

'Yeah? but Brian didn't say all that, she's made most of it up, just spun some of the better bits. She might have dished the dirt on me but she used Brian. That's not a nice feeling at all, I'd certainly hate it. I bet Brian hates it (Zeller is nodding fervently) so no, no hard feelings' he sticks his hand out and Brian, with some surprise, shakes it.

'Also, and this is me being an unrepentant shit, I am going to milk this for months!' Everyone laughs at that, Jimmy cuffs Brian again, and Bev points at him. Zeller wiggles guiltily. Hannibal smiles at him slightly, he and Brian have talked about this little dirty secret already.

He and Jimmy accept glasses of wine and the five of them sit around talking intently about the mushroom case for another thirty minutes. Jimmy leaves for his book thing (nope, still not saying a word), Brian leaves to go to something undefined (no not another rendezvous with Freddie). And this leaves Will, with Hannibal and Beverly. He finishes his glass of mineral water and makes a face at it.

'Ok. I'm going to head home. If I go now I'll make it back before this headache kicks in (yay to be me). Text me with anything interesting. Bev that's not a licence to send me more stuff about Willard Wiggins'. He sketches a wave at both of them and goes out into the waiting area. They hear the outer door shut. Then a few moments later they hear a car start up and then fade into the distance as it is driven away.

Beverly looks at Hannibal 'I know you can't say, but I'm pretty sure that although Will is the best, he's not ok right now. I know I hardly know him, it's been what, less than two months. But you can tell too can't you?'

Hannibal says nothing, but looks at Beverly as honestly as he can,

She looks upset, 'Shit. I know he's ok to go back in the field, that fundamentally he's sound, but there's all this other stuff. Really I'm scared for him'

'He is lucky to have friends like you'

'And you?'

'Yes. Outside of the professional dynamic he and I have observed, I see a very kind, interesting, warm person. His atypical neurology can sometimes make that harder to see from the outside, and frankly we usually interact when things are bad or have been very recently, but I like him. I like him enormously.'

'I hoped you did'

'For any particular reason, other than that you care for your friend?'

'Professionally I think you help him a lot. And I know he uses you as a sounding board for cases. You're good at helping him make leaps. He doesn't need to wait for you to keep up, you just do, right?'

Hannibal nods, he can see this, is slightly flattered that Beverly has also seen it. 'And?'

'I think personally you also like him. He definitely likes you.' They both smile.

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Later that evening Hannibal is sitting in his small study, with a cup of tea and a book. His phone buzzes with a text from Beverly

did you speak to Will since he got home, he's not answering

I haven't, would you like me to call him?

I'll try him again. Have you got his land line? Will you try him on that

Hannibal gets up to pick up his land line handset, he looks up Will's number in his own cell and dials. He can hear the phone ring out, six rings and then it cuts to an answering service. He texts Beverly again

He is not answering his landline, have you tried his cell again?

* I have, I tried to text, and IM, and Skype to his laptop*

* Is there a particular reason you are concerned other than his feeling slightly unwell earlier?
*

He waits for a moment and then his cell rings, Beverly launches straight in

'This might be stupid, but I thought about the article a bit more. You know it goes on about Will being able to think like a killer, and make connections with anybody and all that stuff'

'I am aware yes' Hannibal read the article again this evening, he felt renewed amazement that Will so readily forgave Brian. It is both intrusive and dangerously speculative 'Do you think something might have happened?'

'I'm really not sure. It just seems a bit odd. He's got this empathy thing. And the article is all about him connecting, and we've just been speculating that this mushroom guy is all about

connecting. He could have just gone to sleep couldn't he? Actually what I want you to say right now is that of course that's what's happened, he's gone to sleep, or switched off his phone, or something like that'

'Beverly it is possible, but I suspect the dogs would have woken him, when the phones rang. What is your thinking about the next best course of action?'

'I think I'm actually going to ring Jack and tell him, usually I wouldn't but I just have some weird.....' she tails off. 'I'm going to get dressed and head back to the lab, I'm going to call Brian and Jimmy too. You should come.'

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Ninety minutes later the four of them are at the lab and have been joined by Jack Crawford and a local Virginia policeman. 'So, this guy walks straight up to our man, and shoots him, this lady, the journalist just freezes so she says, and then he asks where he can find your guy Graham, she straight up gave him his address, we got guys going there right now.'

They stand around, forced to wait for another fifteen minutes before the policeman gets a call 'ok, ok, yes. I'll tell them. Yes. No. really? Ok' 'Right, Agent Graham's car is there, the front door is unlocked and open, there are several dogs on the loose. There is no sign of Graham. But he must have been taken from there. There's evidence of a struggle in the living room. Would he have been armed? No no, (he sees alarm on their faces) there's no evidence of a shooting, I just wondered.'

They'd made substantial progress on the case just earlier in the evening, Will drawing almost magically from thin air the possibility that all the cases were linked by insulin dependent diabetes. That and the idea the perp was seeking connection. Now his theorising might mean the difference between his life and death. Jack mobilises everyone quickly. Within an hour there are traces going out state wide on diabetes medication and any link to the bodies they found in the mushroom garden.

Hannibal stays still, seated in the background, observing everyone working hard. He can see the strain on their faces. When it's personal, it's very personal. Brian in particular looks as though he'd dig up Virginia if it would help. The blossom of guilt is across his face. No one mentions it. If Jack knew about Freddie Lounds he'd be suspended for sure, maybe worse.

He considers his own feelings. He's been keeping them in the background, suspecting they'd be of little practical use. When Beverly shouts they have a lead his heart bangs hard, twice, and he realises all the emotion he has suppressed have been fears and anguish, and that these are legion. Will.

At the 24hr supermarket they find both their suspect Eldon Stannetts and his car. At first no one knows to check it. But Brian redeems himself by noticing earth on the car park floor under the car, as though something was disturbed. Will is buried in compost in the trunk. Unconscious but alive. Bev sobs into Hannibal's jacket, they are both unconscionably relieved.

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The following day at the hospital Alana arrives to find Will awake having a lively conversation with Hannibal. Alana has known Hannibal for nearly ten years, she has never seen him look so informal anywhere. Granted he is probably still dressed in yesterday's clothes, but he is smiling cheerily.

'Hey Alana, come on in, we're just talking about what a fun guy Mr Stammetts is' Will grins at her

'please tell me you did not just make such an awful pun, Hannibal is bad enough'

'yeah? I think he's rubbing off on me! Wow, did that sound rude? It did, didn't it. It's the drugs. Honest. I'm a rubbish flirt. I'm not flirting. I'm making this worse? I shall shut up now.

Alana is amazed to see Hannibal look amused rather than offended. She hadn't realised they got on together this well. 'I'm glad you're alright. What happened?'

'I don't really know. I got back home after leaving Hannibal's and fed the dogs, I was sitting on the porch, and the next thing I know I wake up here feeling ground down (ho ho ho, good isn't it)'

Hannibal rolls his eyes and side eyes Alana, and to her amazement he reaches out and pats Will's hand, and Will uses his other hand to pat Hannibal's. 'It's a good job Bev missed my scintillating conversation and thought to raise the alarm when she couldn't reach me'

'yes, it is, why did she?'

'Oh, she's making me be sociable, do stuff, see people, go to the movies, she quite often texts me late at night. I'm her bro. That's still the drugs talking by the way. Why? Do you want to have late night texts too, I can do that, totally. Hannibal, you'll remind me to text Alana too, when I text you, last thing? Alana we can be text buddies. Oh. I feel a bit tired' almost without warning he's suddenly asleep on the bed still holding onto Hannibal's hand. Hannibal smiles fondly at him and then at Alana.

'Hannibal? What exactly is going on?'

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